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T W O
SERMONS

Preached at St. *MARY's*

Before the

UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*,

Feb. 11. 1757.

and *Mar. 12. 1762.*

Being the *DAYS* appointed for

GENERAL FASTING

AND

HUMILIATION, &c.

By *JOHN BURTON*, D. D.
Fellow of *ETON* College.

O X F O R D :

Printed at the *THEATER* for *J. FLETCHER*
in the *Turl*, *Oxon*, and sold by *J. FLETCHER*
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Imprimatur,

JO. BROWNE,

Vice-Can. Oxon.

Mar. 23. 1762.



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Fellow of Br. n. College.

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ISA I. XXII. 12, 13, 14.

And in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: — And behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; “let us eat and drink for to morrow we shall die.” And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.

IN this chapter we have before us a prophetic representation of the calamities, which sooner or later should be brought upon the *Jews* by a foreign invasion. The design of this and other like prophecies was to awaken that proud luxurious people out of a state of unwarranted *security* — to make them apprehensive of their real *danger* — to call off their trust from the arm of *flesh*, from means merely *human*, their political wisdom and military power — to direct their views to the *Lord God of Hosts*: to the end that they might feel

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the necessity of humbling themselves under his mighty hand, and by the reformation of their manners reconcile themselves to his favour, and engage his protection.

The words of my Text contain several particulars which merit our serious regard: and more especially, as the similitude of many circumstances points out the application to our own case.

For the better understanding the whole, I shall briefly consider and explain each clause; and, as I pass on, occasionally offer some reflexions — and lastly apply the Doctrine to its *moral* uses, and the purposes of the present *Solemnity*.

The first point here asserted is a *matter of Fact*: namely, that God did call the *Jews* to repentance. Now concerning the *manner* of this divine Call 'tis to be observed, that this is either *ordinary* or *extraordinary*. Of the former sort is that which is convey'd to an attentive considerate mind in the common dispensations of God's *Providence*; where the *notoriety* of the case it self, as it points out the interposition of the finger of *God*, does withal suggest the moral duties required of men in such circumstances: so that *when God's judgments are seen in the earth the inhabitants may learn righteousness*. To this head may also be referred *that* Call, which is contained in God's *standing Word*, applied by his Ministers for the instruction and admonition of the people, and is, as it were, an occasional republication of the divine will.

But

But the *latter* sort implies the *visible* interposition of God himself upon some special and important occasions: as when God raises up Prophets, the preachers of righteousness and Heralds of his judgments empowered to declare to the people some particular and interesting message. Such we suppose *that* Call to be which is mentioned in my Text. It does not indeed appear from the Chapter that this extraordinary message was delivered by *Isaiah* himself: yet though not expressly mentioned, it is by no means *improbable*; since the general tenour of his preaching tended to this point.

But this is certain, that there was a solemn expostulation and withal a severe denunciation of God's judgments delivered by a contemporary of *Isaiah*, the Prophet ^a *Micah*. And we find it cited by *Jeremiah* 26. 18. *Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah King of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah.* ^b Now the purport of this is the same with that of *Isaiah's* prophecies: first there is an upbraiding representation of national wickedness; and in consequence of that, there follows a threatening of national punishment.

^a c. III, 9, 10, 11, 12. ^b of Judah — saying, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord and besought the Lord? and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our own souls. *Jer.* 26. 18, 19.

Now

Now concerning the *manner* of the divine Call it may be remarked: that in proportion to the notoriety of the Call, or the extraordinary circumstances, by which the delivery of it is attended, being such as are best suited to excite mens regard and command their reverence; I say, in proportion to the means of conviction thus offered, mens inattention, irreverence and disobedience receive additional degrees of aggravation, and subject them to the more severe inflictions of the divine judgments.

The next particular to be observed is the circumstance of *Time*, when this Call was made. The terms, in which this is expressed, are not indeed precisely determinate: *in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call, &c.* there is no reference here expressly made to any particular *transaction*, by which the date might be ascertained. But, from many internal evidences contained in this chapter, compared with several circumstances mentioned in other parts of Scripture, we may in general, upon good grounds, collect that this Call was made in the reign of King *Hezekiah* — ^a *after* the Reformation of Religion in the *Jewish* Church, and the reestablishment of the State — ^b *after* his successful war with the Philistines, — and *after* the recovery of the territories, which, in the time of his fa-

^a This reformation was begun in the first year of *Hezekiah*.
2 Chron. 29.

^b 2 Kings 18, 8. see history of *Abaz* there, and 2 Chron. 28. 17, 18.

ther *Abaz*, were torn away from *Judab* —
^a after the destruction and captivity of *Israel* by
Shalmaneser King of *Affyria* — ^b after his shak-
ing off the yoke of Subjection to the *Affy-*
rian — ^c after his strengthening of *Jerusalem* in
an extraordinary manner by all kinds of mili-
tary provision — ^d before the degradation and
punishment of *Shebna*, the Treasurer, who was
over the House — ^e before the advancement of
Eliakim into his Post — ^f and therefore before
the advancing of *Sennacherib* against *Jerusalem*
after his success in other attempts — ^g before the
Embassy of *Rabshakeb* in defiance of the God
of *Israel*: at which time we find that ^h *Eli-*
akim was in fact invested in the title and office,
which was before possessed by *Shebna*: so that,
upon the whole, it appears to have been in the

^a 2 Kings 17. 6. this happened in the 6th year of *Heze-*
kiab.

^b 2 Kings 18. 7. the *Affyrian* was then engaged in other
wars: and, after having besieged *Tyre* five years, he dies: *Sen-*
nacherib succeeds.

^c 2 Chron. 32. 3, 4, 5, 6. — & *Isai*. 22, 8, 9, 10, 11. —
this preparation was made by *Hezekiab* upon the invasion threat-
ened by *Sennacherib*.

^d *Isai*. 22. 15, 16, 17. — where the pride and fall of this
Minister is represented.

^e *Isai*. 22. 20, 21. — this change happened in the same year
soon afterwards.

^f 2 Kings 18. 13. — *Isai*. 36. 1. — *Sennacherib* had before
this attacked some other Cities of *Judab*; but some other wars
called him off for a while: he was now returned; and threat-
ened *Jerusalem* with a siege.

^g *Isai*. 36. 2, 4.

^h *Isai*. 36. 3.—37. 2. — 22. 20. — *Eliakim* was now prime
Minister.

14th year of *Hezekiah's* reign, ^a that year in which *Sennacherib* came up against the fenced cities of *Judah* and took them — at which time ^b *Hezekiah*, under the apprehension of the common danger, did submit to pay three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold to that perfidious Prince; who received the money, but broke his faith, and renewed the invasion — ^c that year in which *Hezekiah* was sick unto death — in which he was favoured with a miraculous assurance of his ^d recovery and the deliverance of ^e *Jerusalem* from the *Affyrian* power. — I look upon *this*, as the critical juncture of time implied in my Text. It seems that *Sennacherib* had, upon advice that ^f *Tirbakah* King of *Ethiopia* was come forth to make war with him, for awhile withdrawn his powers from *Judea*, and marched out to give him battle: and having then defeated the allied army, on which the *Jews* had placed no small confidence, he resumed his attempt upon *Jerusalem*. A siege was threatened and expected: all manner of preparation was made for the defence of the City: King *Hezekiah* at the point

^a *Isai.* 36. 1. — *2 Kings* 18. 15.

^b *2 Kings* 18. 13, 14. - - -

^c *2 Kings* 20. 1. — *Isa.* 38. 1. — *Hezekiah's* cure effected v. 7. Retrograde motion of the sun v. 8. Behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years, and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the King of *Affyria*, and I will defend this city — *Isa.* 38. 5, 6. —

^d *2 Kings* 20. 5.

^e *2 Kings* 20. 6.

^f *Isai.* 37. 9.

of death was miraculously recovered, and at the same time comforted with the assurance of blessings both personal and publick, ^a the addition of fifteen years to the term of his life, and the divine protection of *Jerusalem* against the blasphemous invader.

^b Tis not improbable that on these accounts both King and People, presuming on their present and future security, instead of expressing their gratitude for the wonderful blessings received, and their just sense of their dependency on the Author of their happiness, by some solemn acts of piety and humiliation, grew intemperate in the expressions of their ill-timed sensual joy; they wantonly triumphed in their present prosperity, unmindful of their almighty Deliverer; and by this instance of ingratitude they incurred the displeasure of God, whose goodness they abused. This supposition, on the face of things, appears probable; such behaviour, by the common effect of prosperity, being in general found agreeable to the ordinary workings of mens perverse minds; it was particularly so to the temper of the *Jews*, a people not more distinguished by uncommon felicities, than by their ingratitude: an untoward disposition! ^c which their inspired Lawgiver foreseeing, en-

^a Isa. 38. 5. *Hezekiah* reigned in all twenty nine years — the invasion by *Sennacherib* — his sickness and recovery happened in the 14th year: the 15 years added make up the whole 29 years.

^b 2 Chron. 32. 25.

^c Deut. 6. 10, 11, 12. Deut. 8. 10, 11.

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deavoured to prevent and discourage by variety of cautions and admonitions.

But further — the sacred history likewise countenances this supposition: for we read in *2 Chron. 32. 25, 26.* *that Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him: for his heart was lifted up; therefore was there wrath upon him, and upon Judah, and upon Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.*

It appears from this passage that some benefit was done unto *Hezekiah*, and that in a double respect, national as well as personal: for an assurance of *both* was given by the Prophet at the same time. We here see the effect of the promised security, ingratitude and pride of heart; and, in consequence of this, the wrath of God denounced both against the King and People; and not improbably by the very same Prophet, who had just before delivered the glad tidings of the common safety; — and lastly, the suspension of the threatened judgments upon their humiliation: — all these circumstances concur to support the probability of the supposition above mentioned.

But after all, if the terms in *that day* be understood as connected with the clause immediately preceding, then the time of the Prophecy probably takes place, when the *Assyrian* powers being for a while withdrawn, the *Jews* had

had improved the advantage of that calm interval, and having compleated the fortifications of *Jerusalem*, now triumphed in their imaginary state of security: accordingly we may conceive this to be the connexion of the Prophet's discourse and exhortation with the *Jews*: "Ye have indeed used the
 "best human means for the defence of your
 "City; and I am far from blaming such necessary precautions: but herein I condemn your
 "folly and wickedness, in that at the same time
 "you have not any respect unto your almighty
 "Defender. Under these circumstances, acts of
 "piety and humiliation would better become
 "you than these expressions of hasty joy and
 "sensual pleasures; since hereby, as ye do not
 "shew any sense of God's goodness, you most
 "assuredly provoke his displeasure." — Now all this may very well agree with the present supposition that this transaction happened in the fourteenth year of *Hezekiah*. So that, on the whole, we may consider the *day*, in which the Lord God of Hosts called the *Jews* to repentance, not as a day of immediate trouble and distress, but rather as a day of publick ease and security, and therefore a day of danger, of danger more real and certain as being less suspected and foreseen, and, as such, worthy of some extraordinary interposition.

From hence we are led to the next thing observable, namely, the *moral* character of the *Jews*, which gave occasion to the severe threatening

ening in the last clause of my Text. This we may collect from several passages of sacred history drawn together.

First then, from 2 *Chron.* 32. 25. we perceive their over-weening pride and ingratitude.

2dly, from *Isaiab*, chap. 30. and 31. we perceive their irreligious distrust of the divine protection, by having recourse to methods disapproved by God; such as making alliances with *Pharaoh*, and trusting in the shadow of *Egypt*, and depending upon these succours, as sufficient to make head against the formidable *Assyrian*.

3dly, We find the prophet *Micah* brings a heavy charge of oppression and injustice, of bribery and corruption; *the Heads of the people judge for reward, and the Priests teach for hire.*

— of gross hypocrisy, and vain pretences to Religion, and the divine favour; and in consequence of this, their assurance of safety and prosperity in the midst of difficulties and dangers. Notwithstanding their wicked practices, yet *they lean upon the Lord, and say, is not the Lord among us? no evil shall happen unto us.* He then denounces the just judgments of God upon *Jerusalem*: therefore *shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps.*

4thly, The Text and context represent their abuse of plenty, their sensuality, their dissolute gaiety and levity of mind, their carnal security, their confidence in their own power, disclaiming the necessity of the divine protection; and all this at a time, when the danger, being only
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for a while suspended, ought to have awakened their just apprehension, and when the sense of their dependent sinful state called them rather to a serious contrition with acts of abstinence and humiliation. Accordingly our Prophet thus expostulates with them in the words immediately preceding my Text: *And thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool; and ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall: ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the waters of the old pool, but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.*

It appears by this account, that they had been industrious in making the best provision for the defence of the City: but they were too well pleased with the imagined sufficiency of their own performances: they thought that *they had counsel and strength for the war.*^a Their walls were repaired and fortified with *towers*. Whatsoever might be of use to the enemy or incumbrance to the inhabitants, was destroyed; ^b the waters of the brook by under-ground pipes were conveyed from without the walls into the City, so as to relieve their own wants, and distress the besiegers; ^c their magazines were well furnished,

a 2 Chron. 32. 5. — Is. 22. 10.

b 2 Chron. 32. 3, 4. — 10. — Is. 22. 9. — 11.

c 2 Chron. 32. 5, 6. — 27, 28, 29. — Is. 22. 8.

their armory in complete order: so that from without and within they were, humanly speaking, well prepared for a siege. But — they depended so entirely on these preparations that they began to forget that they were under a *Theocracy*: they placed their confidence merely in the arm of flesh: they gloried in their self-sufficiency, and, in consequence of such wrong persuasions, they were so far from expressing any sense of piety and humiliation, which their real circumstances should have suggested, and which God did then more especially require, that they rejoiced and rioted as in the day of triumph and prosperity, with all the wantonness of jollity and luxury. Upon this followed the just denuntiation of God's judgment upon them in the words of my Text.

We may here remark two points of doctrine: namely, the wrath of God denounced against impenitent sinners, and at the same time also his forbearance and goodness, which should lead men to repentance. His threatnings, as well as promises, are conditional; they both are intended to work a change in the moral man, and thereby to reinstate him in the privileges of the divine favour, which are annexed to his obedience. In truth, there is the greater kindness in the appearance of the greater severity: his admonitions go before punishments in order to prevent the infliction; and the infliction itself is intended to prevent destruction.

Accordingly God *in that day*, a day of unperceived danger, did either by the preaching
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of *Isaiab*, or the Prophet *Micah*, admonish and call this unattentive People to a serious frame of mind, to all proper expressions of penitence and sorrow; such as the sense of their wickedness, and the sad effects attending it ought to suggest; such as were the natural or instituted means to deprecate God's anger, and avert his judgments: *in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth.*

In the next place, we may remark the monstrous infatuation and perverseness of the people, deaf to this seasonable admonition. Instead of humbling themselves before God under the serious conviction of their wickedness and danger, they acted like men under the assurance of safety and the divine favour, with all the insolence of rejoicing, with all expressions of brutish luxury and triumph: *behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine!* Behold not merely an act of simple disobedience to the divine will, but an active presumptuous opposition and defiance, a wantonness of contempt, and doing despite to this profered mercy and grace of God.

But further, we may observe that absurd principle, upon which they justified their proceedings: *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we die!* it seems the shortness of their lives and their approaching fate was by a preposterous way of reasoning, perverted into an argument for indulging their sensual appetites, and living and dying like brute beasts. — Or perhaps this
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may be supposed spoken by way of ridicule and profane banter upon the Preachers of repentance, thus, “ if then, as these Prophets threaten
 “ us, our destruction is really approaching —
 “ well, be it so: since we have hope in this
 “ life only, let us not make our selves miserable by the anticipation of future evils, or by
 “ the rigours of any present penance; but let
 “ us improve the short space of time to the best
 “ advantage, by all kinds of mirth and jollity,
 “ by every pleasure of the animal life.

In whatever point of view we consider the case, we cannot but condemn their behaviour, as brutish and wicked, foolish and profane; inconsistent with the very character of reasonable men; but more so of those, who were called the chosen people of God. — To be indolent and insensible in times of danger, is a proof of an inexcusable weakness or stupidity: but to riot in luxury, in the ungracious abuse of God's bounty, when they were in a solemn manner called to acts of abstinence and penance, and that upon such principles as would become only a mere Epicure, or the *Fool, that hath said in his heart there is no God*, — This was such an aggravation of their wickedness, as might justly prepare our expectation for some extraordinary inflictions of the divine vengeance. And such we accordingly find denounced in the following verse; *and it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.* A terrible denunciation! a solemn
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emphasis of woe ! which might well make the ears of every one that heard it to tingle ! which, with an effect like that which, some time afterwards, the miraculous hand-writing on the wall had upon *Belsbazzar*, would at once damp the jollity of the feast, work an instantaneous conviction in their minds, and awaken a luxurious riotous people into a serious apprehension of danger, and dread of impending punishments, and in the end produce a change of heart and reformation of manners.

And indeed we have good grounds to believe that these denunciations of the divine judgments by the Prophets were not delivered in vain. As far as we may in this case argue from the effect, from temporal blessings, which were visible marks of the divine favour, the present supposition seems to be well founded : for we find that, throughout the remaining part of *Hezekiah's* reign, for the space of fifteen years, the *Jews* did in fact enjoy a state of continued prosperity. Yea we may perceive the reason of this as contained in the above-cited passage from *2 Chron. 32. 26.* When wrath was upon the King and People for their ungracious behaviour, we read, that *he humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.*

But further still (which comes more directly to the point) in the 26th chapter of *Jeremiah*, where the prophecy of *Micah* the *Morasthite* is expressly cited, this reflexion is immediately sub-

subjoined ; *Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord? and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them.*

From this portion of scripture we learn that, in consequence of the divine Call by his Prophet, there followed a national repentance; and, in consequence of that, a suspension of the threatened judgments, a reconciliation to the divine favour, and an uninterrupted national prosperity.

Propitious be the omen from this example! may the sincerity of like repentance alleviate the guilt and punishment of like offences! may we in this our day know the things which belong to our peace! and may the Lord our God be gracious unto us, and rejoice over us for good continually!

I am now come to make application of the Doctrine to the proper moral uses, and the purposes of the present solemnity.

Hath then God called this kingdom to solemn acts of humiliation and repentance? — What is the manner and occasion of this Call? — what frame of mind and behaviour is required of us in our present circumstances? — An enquiry into these particulars will take in the consideration of all that seems most material and pertinent to our purpose.

God hath not indeed given this nation such an extraordinary Call, as he gave to *Hezekiah* and the men of *Judah*. He hath not immediately

diately sent a special message by his Prophet, declaring his will and denouncing his judgments: this was the singular privilege of the *Jews*, under a Theocracy. — Nor hath God spoken immediately to us in the *strong wind and earth-quake*, in the extreme vehemence of his displeasure, and terrors of his judgments, the sword, the pestilence, and famine: though even in these respects we perceive uncommon occurrences which might justly awaken our fears and engage our circumspection. — But surely a sufficient Call hath been given us in an ordinary way. God hath been continually speaking to us in a *still small voice*: by the preaching of the Ministers of his Gospel he makes a sufficient declaration of his will and the people's duty: by the proper application of general rules in his written word to any particular cases, we are taught to know and obey his Laws, and dread his displeasure; to consider his goodness and severity in a practical view, as leading to repentance.

Moreover God addresses himself to every considerate attentive mind in the course of his providential dispensations, in the silent emphatical language of many singular events: thus *the Lords voice crieth unto the city: and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: bear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. Mic. 6. 9.* And indeed many events have occurred of an uncommon alarming nature, such as speak his more immediate interposition; such as might justly strike our minds with the apprehension of dangers, and

recollect our dissipated thoughts into a frame of seriousness. *The man of wisdom* will read the admonition, and avoid the foreseen mischief.

But besides this general and ordinary manner, we have received a special and extraordinary call by the voice of publick authority. In obedience to this we are now assembled in the house of God, with fasting and humiliation before the throne of divine grace, “for obtaining pardon of our sins, and averting those heavy judgments which our manifold provocations have most justly deserved — and for imploring God’s blessing and assistance on the arms of his Majesty, and for restoring and perpetuating peace, safety and prosperity to these kingdoms.”

These are ends of serious and solemn importance, and accordingly demand our most serious regard. And may the good purposes of this publick appointment not be frustrated by our insensibility or irreverence in the manner of observance! But rather may our present religious services be a sacrifice acceptable to the Lord, and constitute the character of “*such a Fast as He hath chosen!*”

We read in the history of our blessed Saviour, that on his approach to *Jerusalem*, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, *if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now are they hid from thine eyes.* Such are the sentiments of a tender and generous mind, excited by the apprehension of evils both natural and moral,

moral, and that train of fatal consequences, which would soon befall a thoughtless and obstinate people. And who now, that beholds our *Jerusalem* in the present state of things, what considerate well-wisher to his country doth not feel some emotions of compassion and painful sollicitude? I am here led into an enquiry into our national state, in the several views, Political, Moral and Religious, or, how we have behaved in our several stations and capacities as members of the civil community, as men, and as Christians. And surely, such an enquiry, upon this occasion, admits no dissimulation, and needs no apology; for without it we cannot exercise a sincere repentance, nor be reconciled to the divine favour.

And here, what occurs more obvious to our notice (even in a distant view without descending to particulars) what more obvious than the general want of a quality which hath been formerly esteemed constitutional and characteristic in *Englishmen*, *seriousness of thought*, and *gravity of manners*; that habit of mind, which is the ground-work of every virtue; that reverence of laws divine and human; that awful sollicitude for things of real importance; that sincere zeal for publick good; that sense of decorum and dignity of character—how shall I say that this manly habit of mind is in some measure among all orders and degrees of men become unfashionable, disgraced and exploded? And what now is substituted in its room? Something foreign to our constitution,

tion, and unnatural to our temper; a levity of manners, a vain gaiety, and dissipation of thought — an inattention to every important business, — a zealous concern about trifles, an unmanly elegance of taste, false politeness, expensive vicious luxury in every shape — and to sum up the compendium of all mischief, the *French* corruption of our morals? Methinks our enemies seem to have almost conquered us already by introducing among us the imitation of their follies and vices, which enervate our powers through disuse, or corrupt them by misapplication. — But after all, is it not a strange infatuation that we should be thus seduced by the example of a people, whom we have the justest reason to condemn or dread? Is it not unaccountable that even thinking men should industriously, as it were by a general consent, pervert the reason and order of things? that, instead of attending to the *one thing needful*, they should make I know not what diversions and amusements the primary and ultimate concern of their lives, and sacrifice every serious regard to the Idol of Pleasure? and this too in a critical juncture of time, when their most important interests lie at stake, when the apprehension of the common danger should awaken them out of their dream of security, and call out all their powers in the common defence? Surely the view of our political state, and the anticipation of probable events, ought to fill our minds with a proportionate anxiety, and excite our circumspection.

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We are engaged in an expensive war, unsupported by Allies from abroad, a war with our most formidable neighbour, a nation constitutionally our enemy, our rival in trade and naval power, not less opposite to us in every scheme of interest, than in principles of Religion and Civil Government, a war most dangerous in its consequences, and probably drawn upon us by the very fear of the growing danger. — Under these alarming circumstances have we not abundant reason to be serious and solicitous, and to *apply our hearts unto wisdom?* God, to whose arbitration we submit our cause in this dreadful appeal, (if I may be allowed to apply the Prophet's words) *calls us on this occasion to weeping and mourning*, the most significant expression of humiliation and penitence for our manifold sins, which have provoked his displeasure. But hath our behaviour been such as was becoming persons under such convictions, and answerable to such a situation? hath the sense of our guilt, or the fear of punishment produced an habitual seriousness or penitential sorrow? hath the apprehension of dangers given any interruption to the fashionable scheme of painful pleasures, splendid follies, and expensive vices? *Behold joy and gladness*, as in a state of security! In the mean while *the daughters of Zion* have seemed to sit at ease, and to put away the evil day, busied in amusements, and sporting away their lives in vanity. And how few among us did lay these things to heart, or were grieved for the affliction of Joseph?

seph? the attention of some was swallowed up in sordid cares of avarice, — of others, diverted by a pursuit of sensual pleasures: *the viol and the tabret and the pipe are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands.*

Such a levity of mind is naturally productive of inconsistencies in behaviour. Accordingly amidst luxury we hear complaints of national poverty, complaints of taxes and burdens insupportable. But have we seen the complainers endeavouring to retrench their expences, or shewing any laudable instance of temperance and frugality? *Behold* rather, in our Prophet's language, *slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine*, with all the customary expressions of joyous luxury. Amidst the scarcity of bread and distresses of the poor, *the rich man sateth sumptuously every day, while the beggar at his gate in vain desires to be fed with the crumbs which fall from his table.* — Others are complaining of the shortness of life, and yet taking great pains to kill and consume those precious hours, which they know not how to use, and all this, at the expence of their health, fortunes and reputation.

Let us look now on the men of business, and examine the merit of the great Politicians. We hear noisy pretensions of signal services and warm professions of zeal for the publick good: But what at the bottom do we generally discover this to be? nothing in reality, but sordid attachment to a scheme of private interest, which,

which, consistently with their narrow views, is made the standard of publick good. Credulous people are deceived by the sound of words: their party praise their saying, and *thereout suck they no small advantage*. However men may dignify their schemes by specious titles, yet this is certain, that in proportion as any party-interest takes place, the publick interest is obstructed: for a Part cannot pass for the Whole; nor the spirit of faction for a publick spirit: the common good is generally injured by men's contention for private advantages, as their services are diverted from their proper employment.

On the other hand, wherever we observe the exercise of abstinence and moderation amidst the means of wealth and power, we justly admire and reverence such distinguished characters: the praise of this is proportionally more meritorious, as it is singular and uncommon. Most men are forward enough to make magnificent professions; but self-denial is the true test of sincerity: where this is found, there is some sure ground for confidence: and well may the people rejoice, when they see such examples of true magnanimity and publick-spirited virtue!

From this general brief account we collect that our moral and political state bears a bad aspect. One might be led to imagine that the minds of men were under an universal infatuation, and given up to strong delusions. But after all, 'tis not want of knowledge in this inquisitive

quisitive enlightened age; 'tis the want of Christian virtue, which affords chief matter of our complaint. Men are destitute of the true spirit of Christianity, of those religious principles, which would sanctify their abilities in every station. They cannot bear that scheme of morality, which imposes a restraint on their sensual appetites: they cannot relish that wisdom which is purely spiritual: nor have they any concern for Christ's kingdom, because *it is not of this world*. If they were better Christians, they would also be better members of the Commonwealth in all capacities: and it would appear that the *fear of God is the beginning and perfection of wisdom* political, as well as religious.

And this leads me to make a brief reflexion on our national state with regard to our religious character, as our faultiness in this respect supplies one principal cause and matter of our present humiliation. Men in every age have complained of the degeneracy of the present times. Wickedness hath always abounded in different shapes and degrees: but there seems to be one circumstance, which distinguishes the character of this age from that of preceding generations, namely, the want of hypocrisy and dissimulation of our vices. Yea the sense of shame and decency seems in a great measure to be extinguished; and profaneness and irreligion appear more openly in publick with an air of popularity and triumph. — The man of quality and fashion hath now too much honour to be

be thought an hypocrite; and accordingly presumes to act in open defiance of God's Laws; yea, and glorieth in the unpunished applauded presumption.

The man of wit is too wise to believe Revelation: he is bold enough to contradict what was written for his instruction, and to ridicule that justice, which one day he will have reason to dread.

And as for the common people, who are guided by the example of their superiors, what can be expected of them under such influence, but a brutish contempt of every thing sacred and serious, which they see so entirely disregarded by those, who are supposed to know better? Hence it comes to pass that common swearing, blasphemy, and profaneness are so frequently heard in our streets, and that with impunity, and in contempt of laws both human and divine: the people seem to sin greedily, and with an air of impudence; and to have the fear of man before their eyes no more, than they have the fear of God. *Because sentence is not speedily executed against their evil works their hearts are set to do evil.*

Further, with regard to the exercise of our common Christian liberty, how strangely do we see this abused? Some men think it a matter of indifference whether they are of the established Religion or of any Religion at all. They are contented to pass for men of morals, men of probity and honour; and under the notion of Protestants forget that they are Christians:

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for their behaviour is really inconsistent with this character, since they neither keep God's sabbaths, nor reverence his sanctuary, nor honour his holy word, his name, or ordinances. The house of God is deserted, while every temple of pleasure is assiduously frequented; and *the great man boweth down and the mean man humbleth himself before that great idol, which every man hath set up in his heart.*

If we carry our views into the several communities both the smaller and the greater, into private families and publick societies, do we not perceive an universal relaxation of discipline, both directive and coercive? Government, domestick, as well as publick, is corrupted or dissolved: members of the little community are left much at liberty; without precept, without example, and destitute of those principles which are the only preservative and security of their good moral behaviour. And what then must be the condition of the publick, which is made up of these families united?

In the mean while, how little care is taken of religious education? and what can be expected where there are no principles instilled which might awe the mind, and restrain the irregular sallies of imagination? What can be expected, when our Youth go to the Playhouse, as to a school of Morality — learn wit from the chair of the scorner — pick up principles of Religion in Coffee-houses, — and their system of Politicks at Gaming-tables?

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Consider now the behaviour of Parents — you will find many of them deficient in point of duty to themselves and to their children. It seems they are too well bred to exact that awe and reverence, which is due to their character. And Children presume to claim a right of indulgence, a premature right of manhood, and of judging for themselves. And withal Servants also are forward to assert their liberty, and insist upon privilege, the privilege of disobedience.

Look now into the larger community among the Great vulgar; there also the same irregularities will be found to prevail; and licentious misrule often takes the place of true rational Liberty. Have we not seen Faction encouraged and supported by popularity, the hands of Governors weakened, and the sons of *Zeruiah* too strong for King *David*? Subjects emboldened in their opposition to Government, impatient of restraint, and seditious not only with impunity, but also with applause; taking a pride in despising that authority, by which they should be kept in awe; and by their cunning eluding, or by their influence overruling those salutary Laws, which the Magistrate wants courage or strength to put in execution? If indeed it be our national praise to have the most wise and wholesome Laws enacted, it is withal not less our national disgrace, to let them become thus ineffectual: In vain are they called in to the aid of Religion, while the *overflowings of ungodliness*, and

the prevalency of confederate wickedness prevent their operation, or disappoint their effect.

On the whole, whithersoever we turn our eyes, we cannot but observe that our liberties, both Civil and Religious are shamefully abused; the glory of our Constitution is perverted into our reproach, and may one day or other end in our ruin: for, wherever the regular exercise of authority is suspended or obstructed, and the subordination of powers is confounded, — wherever the obstinacy and caprice of the subject can overrule the will and invalidate the power of the governour, and the conclusions of publick wisdom are forced to give way to the opposition of perverse private men, *the foundations* of such a Government must be owned to *be out of course*: nor can the frame of the best Constitution long subsist under the influences of such corruption, but by a gradual decay must tend to a dissolution.

It therefore behoves all well wishers to their Country and the common good, instead of distressing publick measures by any ill-natured ill-timed opposition, rather to concur in assisting and strengthening the hands of their Governours, in encouraging and supporting their administrations, for the punishment of wickedness and vice, and the maintenance of true Religion and virtue. And we have all reason to join in the prayer of our Litany, “that God
“would be pleased to bless and keep the Magistrates, giving them grace to execute justice
“and maintain truth.”

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The occasion of the present Solemnity hath led me into many uneasy reflexions on our national state, considered in the several views, *Political, Moral and Religious*. The practical application of what hath been offered is obvious: if from the estimate, founded on a general observation of facts, (and not formed in the most gloomy point of view which imagination might suggest) it appears, that wickedness doth greatly abound and that we are liable to the inflictions of God's judgments, little further need be said to teach us what frame of mind becomes persons in such circumstances: doubtless no other, than that of a serious sollicitude, a sincere penitential sorrow, such as the sense of our guilt and the dread of punishment require; such as the purposes of the present Solemnity recommend and enforce.

This leads me to bring into view the last clause of my Text, which with an emphasis of peculiar severity, denounces God's judgments: *and it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.*

These words are express and peremptory; but, like others of like kind, must be understood with a due latitude, as conditional propositions, and as taking place upon supposition of continued impenitency. I shall accordingly apply them by way of practical motive to repentance: that these terrors of the Lord, denounced by the Prophet, may have the same effect on us,
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as they appear to have had upon the *Jews*, and perswade us to flee from the wrath to come.

We have before our eyes an instructive example in a people, who through wonderful vicissitudes of their fortune experienced the different effects of God's mercy and severity: a people seated by his arm in a *land flowing with milk and honey*; blessed with uncommon affluence of all good things, which they ungraciously abused; discontented with ease and plenty, and impatient of prosperity; prodigal amidst wants, luxurious in the day of mourning, and sporting in the midst of danger; even then regardless of that Providence, by which they had hitherto been wonderfully preserved. So much may be noted in general with respect to their moral character, as it seems to affect our own case. But, it is most pertinent to our present purpose, to recollect that particular passage in their history, to which the words of my text seem immediately to allude. It appears, that, after having for some time enjoyed a state of uninterrupted prosperity under a Prince equally brave and pious, they were at last threatened with an invasion by the most formidable power on earth, the great king of *Assyria*. As they were forewarned of their danger, they made timely preparations; a proceeding not only innocent but commendable. What then was the crime, which gave occasion to this extraordinary interposition of our Prophet? — It was that vice, which generally accompanies a state of ease and
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security; it was their pride in their own performances, their overweening confidence in their own strength and policy, which prompted them to give a loose to the fallies of luxurious mirth and gaiety, at a time unseasonable and in a manner indecent; whereas in their circumstances it rather behoved them to implore God's assistance and blessing upon human means — to submit their cause to his arbitration in humble confidence of his favour — by solemn acts of humiliation to deprecate his displeasure, acknowledge his sovereignty, and engage his protection. This gave occasion to that heavy censure brought by our Prophet in the words of my Text. And we should apply the moral instruction from thence arising to our own case, as far as we find our selves affected by the similitude of concurring circumstances.

Here then, have we not for some time with a sort of jealous dread beheld the growing power of our formidable neighbour the great king of *Assyria*, that disturber of publick peace, and destroyer of kingdoms? Have we not for some time lived under painful apprehension of hostilities, and invasions not in vain threatened? we appeared early in our precautions: considerable armaments both defensive and offensive were prepared: with an unsuspected stroke of policy, such as the example of our enemies seems to have taught us, we surprized the invader in a distant part of the world: we chose to meet the approaching dan-

danger, and to provoke hostilities. We seemed peculiarly pleased with a war in an element; which we boastingly called our *own*. We fortified our selves in our *wooden walls*, collected in our natural powers, in a state of security and defiance. We imagined that we had counsel and strength *for the war: counting whether with ten thousand men we were able to meet him who came against us with twenty thousand*. On the whole, we seemed to flatter our selves with the persuasion of our superiour powers, forward to anticipate the distant event, dreaming of imaginary conquests and triumphing before victory: — But what hath happened since the beginning of the war? surely enough to awaken us out of a state of ease and security — let our enemies speak the rest.

Methinks the prospect on every side presents to us difficulties and discouragements. When we call home our thoughts to our own case, we are struck with the apprehension of what we deserve from God's justice: when we look abroad, we begin to feel what we have reason to dread from the power of our enemies. Yea we terrify ourselves with, I know not what, imaginary dangers: We are alarmed with the sudden dread of a foreign invasion and war in our gates. In the mean while is any provision made for our defence? *is there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?* what a strange diffidence of our powers, What a timidity and self-desertion enfeebles the hands and hearts of our people, so that for our protection
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we must have recourse to mercenary foreign troops, perhaps dearly enough paid, but ill-thanked for their unnecessary services?

But whatever the real circumstances of our national state may be, still the duty of humiliation and penitence will ever take place, as long as we are dependent creatures, and a sinful nation; and more especially so, in the present time of difficulty and danger, *when our host is going forth against the enemy.*

If indeed we are diffident of our strength, or conscious of our weakness, the case then speaks it self: necessity enforces the exercise of piety, and directs our recourse to the divine aid where human succours fail. But, if we were really possessed of all those advantages, which commonly carry with them the assurance of success, yet we must still remember that there is an overruling Providence, whose interposition suspends, directs, and controuls the operation of secondary causes, and, contrary to apparent probabilities, often produces stupendous effects by means disproportionate and inadequate. And indeed God hath not in this respect left himself without witness: the many astonishing vicissitudes in the fate of kingdoms speak his immediate power, and remind the greatest among men of their dependency. He raiseth up one nation for the chastisement of another: he maketh *Assyria the rod of his anger*, the unconscious instrument and executioner of his purposes. Again, *he putteth down the mighty from their seat, and scattereth the proud in the imagination*

nation of their hearts. The best contrived schemes of human policy by some unforeseen occurrences are often unaccountably disconcerted; the counsels of *Achitophel* are defeated; the hearts and hands of the mighty are suddenly weakened; *Kings with their armies flee and are discomfited*: at his command the elements are armed with destruction, *the stars in their courses fought against Siferab*. By such signal interposition of extraordinary power he occasionally asserts his universal sovereignty, *to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men.*

Under such convictions we are taught this lesson of true political wisdom; not to rely wholly on the *arm of flesh*, nor to presume upon the certainty of success from the imagined superiority of our strength; but rather, after the due application of the most probable means, in subordination to the divine will, to refer the arbitration of our cause to him *who judgeth right*, and to submit the issue of things to the conduct of his good providence, in humble confidence of his favour. And indeed there are some peculiar circumstances in a war by sea, which in a more feeling manner inculcate these considerations on our minds: *the works of the Lord and his wonders are seen in the deep*: every hour admonishes men of their dependent and weak condition, while they are beset with such variety of contingencies and perils, or, more properly speaking, with frequent and various interpositions of the divine power commanding

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the ministry of the elements ; making them instrumental either to save or destroy. *He ruleth the raging of the sea : the winds and storms fulfil his word.*

Let us look back into the history of past events : let us consult our own reflexions, and experiences ; — in every view we meet reasons sufficient to discourage all arrogance and presumption in our present state, to teach us a lesson of diffidence and humility, and to direct our application to the fountain of all goodness and power. It is well known that, amidst the changes and chances of our dependent state, the most sanguine expectations are frequently defeated, and presumption is chastised by disappointments. *No king can be saved by the multitude of an host :* Armada's invincible have been overcome ; and fortresses impregnable have been taken, — and what can we say is impossible in the course of God's providence ? God's judgments are already seen in the earth : *the staff of his indignation is lifted up :* and who knoweth the allotments of his justice, and the final issue of things ? In this our day of *trouble*, when the *Assyrian* power is coming down upon us like the rushing of mighty waters, let us, with the good king *Hezekiah*, *go into the house of the Lord*, and with the most significant expressions of penitence and humiliation implore his favour and protection. And, if the continuance of our prosperity hath betrayed us into presumption and security, with a disregard of our almighty defender, and thereby justly pro-

voked some severe chastisement, — let us also, like *Hezekiah* and the men of *Judah* in such circumstances, humble our selves before God for the pride of our hearts, that the wrath of God come not upon us; that the like good effects may attend this national humiliation and repentance; that the breaking off our sins by righteousness may reconcile us to the divine favour; may restore, strengthen, and settle the publick tranquillity of our *Jerusalem* for his names sake.

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Dr. BURTON's
FAST-SERMON

Before the
UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,
Mar. 12. 1762.

Dr. BURTON
FAST-SERMON



UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Mar. 12. 1762.

ISAIAH LVIII. 5, 6.

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth, and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness — &c?

THIS day of publick Humiliation (if I may be allowed to apply the words of king *Hezekiah* on a like occasion) is to us a day of *trouble*, — of *rebuke* — and *blasphemy*: — Of *trouble*, — as suggesting uneasy apprehensions of various unknown dangers and difficulties, incident in the course of a long-continued and far-extended war: of *rebuke* to our sanguine hopes, disappointment of our premature expectations of victories, triumphs, and publick tranquillity: Of *blasphemy*, — as affording matter of slander to our enemies from abroad, and of complaint and murmurs at home. — “*Wherefore lift*

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"up thy prayer for the remnant that is left."

— In such circumstances of distress, where the interposition of divine aid is evidently so much wanted, we are naturally led to make our supplications for direction and support : And the voice of publick authority, with great reason, now calls us *to acts of humiliation, and prayer*. And may the due performance of the religious services prescribed, render *this an acceptable day unto the Lord!*

It was indeed our wish — it was our earnest expectation, that the occasion of our meeting in the house of God should have been different from what we at present find : — that we should have come with our peace-offerings — with sacrifices *eucharistical*, rather than *expiatory* — with thanksgivings for blessings received, rather than deprecations of those temporal evils which we have reason to dread. — But, since God's providence hath ordered things otherwise, it behoves us to bring a frame of mind suited to our present circumstances. Severe admonitions are sometimes necessary to awaken the mind into a serious solicitude and consideration of our true state. *^a It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting,* — to learn a lesson of wisdom in the school of affliction, than riot in the abuse of God's mercies. We are too easily led into the latter by the common weakness of our nature ; and enjoy the pleasing delusion, 'till our prosperity becomes our ruin :

^a Eccles. 7. 2.

To give due impressions of the former is the business of this day's solemnity; and we are now, in a more especial manner, called upon to make proper expressions of our religious principles, to acknowledge God's sovereignty, and our dependency, to confess our demerits, to revere his justice, to bewail our wickedness, and supplicate for his mercy; and to implore His blessing on his Majesty's arms, that, in the end, peace, safety and prosperity may be restored and perpetuated in these kingdoms. These are points of solemn importance; and accordingly demand our most serious regard: And may the effects of these religious impressions be permanent in our hearts; and the exercise of this humiliation prove not merely occasional, and formal, but constant and habitual! may it continue, so long as the reason of it subsists; or in other words, so long as we are sinners! while we continue such we ought to express our penitence, and *bring forth fruits worthy of repentance* in the universal reformation of our manners.

The doctrine contained in the text, and which I would chiefly recommend to your consideration, is the *moral* purpose of Fasting — that great end to which all acts of abstinence are subordinate, as means; shewing, that the *external* formality of observance will little avail, when destitute of the *internal* principles of piety towards God, and charity towards our Neighbour.

The prophet introduces the expostulation of my text with a preface setting forth his authority, as being a messenger from God. *^a Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet; and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.* In like manner, in extraordinary instances of this kind, the ministers of the gospel are authorized to do, what, upon other occasions, the people might be inclined to think less decent or seasonable, *to shew the people their transgressions*; to rebuke vice, and denounce God's judgments against impenitent sinners; not only without dissimulation, or reserve, but with a peculiar degree of freedom. This is not only their privilege, but also their duty.

He then proceeds to remark the dissimulation and hypocrisy of the Jews in their formal acts of religious worship; while at the same time their behaviour contradicted their professions.

^b Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. It seems, they kept up the outward appearances of piety, and made specious professions of righteousness. They punctually attended the temple-service; they offered the sacrifices appointed, and boasted of their legal sanctity: Yea, they even presumed to expostulate with their God

^a Ver. 1.

^b Ver. 2.

for not doing justice to this their singular desert; for not answering their expectations; or not distinguishing their ostentatious piety by some eminent reward.

^a *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?* We here perceive a strong instance of their arrogance as well as folly. It seems they valued themselves upon the mere act of fasting, as a matter of extraordinary merit in the sight of God, and thought God's justice debtor to their claim of reward. The motives and principle, upon which they proceeded, were unwarrantable; and such as would invalidate the effect of all religious services. To them may be applied what St. James says on a like occasion; ^b*They ask and receive not, because they ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts.* Like their perverse fathers in the wilderness *they required meat for their lusts, and grudged if they were not satisfied.* They looked upon every disappointment of their expectations as an injury done them; whereas at the same time they were acting in direct contradiction to the will of God, and industriously defeated the moral purposes of this institution, which they pretended to observe.

^c — *Behold in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labours.* Notwithstanding all the appearances of piety they still indulged their vicious inclinations; notwith-

^a Ver. 3.

^b Jam. 4. 3.

^c Ver. 3.

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standing their shew of rigour and austerity, they did not exercise any act of true self-denial; — in their dealings with their poor brethren they were still hardhearted and oppressive; hardhearted masters to their servants, oppressive creditors to their necessitous debtors.

a * Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Here was an aggravation of their crime, that they made religion an instrument of their wickedness; and under that pretence endeavoured to justify and authorize every act of injustice: They misunderstood and abused this religious ordinance. Hereupon the prophet proceeds to reprove their arrogance, and rectify their mistakes; and to convince them of the insufficiency of the outward act without the true moral uses. These he distinctly points out, as the only qualifications which could recommend their religious services to the divine acceptance.

b Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? it is to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? There is in these words a peculiar force and elegance of the sacred oratory for reproof, — for

a V. 4.

b V. 5.

correction

correction — for instruction in righteousness.^a However, it cannot here be supposed, that the prophet in exhortations of this kind absolutely condemns those rites, or religious acts which God had enjoined, or approved. He condemns only that abuse of sacred ordinances, which rendered them the instruments of hypocrisy. And indeed they become no other than a mere formality and mockery of religion, when destitute of a true principle, and not accompanied with those moral effects, in which all the real goodness of the performance consists.

b Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness; to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Here several acts of negative virtue are pointed out, an abstinence from those crimes to which they were most addicted: And withal, in the following clause, several positive duties are enjoined.

c Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry? and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked that

^a A parallel passage delivered on the like occasion with regard to these religious services, occurs Micah VI. 6, 7, 8. — *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? he hath showed thee O man what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

^b V. 6.

^c V. 7.

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thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? On the whole, they were taught that an outward conformity to the ordinance would not answer the purposes of the institution without a suitable principle of real piety: — that it was not the disfigured, sorrowful countenance — the hypocritical shew of a temporary piety — *the appearing unto men to fast* — that it was not the most superstitious punctuality in the performance of the external act which would recommend those services to God — *this is not the fast, which the Lord hath chosen*: That only is the true fast, which is so in a moral sense; an abstinence from every sort of wickedness; more especially from that *which doth more easily beset us*; acts of denial to ourselves, restraint of our favourite inclinations, sensuality, avarice, ambition, malice, and revenge, &c: — acts of benevolence to others, of charity to the poor and distressed. This is the true *fast which the Lord hath chosen*, as proceeding from a principle of true piety, and directed to a good end: This is the fast which God hath promised to accept and reward. Accordingly the prophet by way of motive and encouragement subjoins the following declaration:

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord

a V. 8, 9.

shall

shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am. In this and the following verses to the end of the chapter the prophet, recapitulating the moral duties he had before injoin'd, recommends them to their practice by the promise of peculiar rewards, represented by such images as convey ideas of whatever is most glorious or amiable: their piety is made the means and condition of their temporal prosperity: the same God who brought their fathers out of *Egypt*, and conducted them through the wilderness with a pillar of fire, shall by his special providence guide and protect them in all dangers and difficulties of life: that God, whom they *worship in spirit and in truth*, will hear their prayer and answer their petitions, and He, *that seeth in secret, himself will reward them openly*: the Lord, who commanded to keep holy the sabbath-day, shall reward their obedience to this command, when their observance proceeds from a true principle of religion; — when they *honour him, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words*. Such instances of self-denial and conformity to the divine will shall intitle them to the divine favour; *then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness shall be as the noon-day*.

So much by way of comment upon the context, as containing useful matter of instruction, suited to the present occasion.

I cannot by way of application draw a complete parallel between our case, and that of the *Jews*; such is the disparity of circumstances. The *Jews* were censured by the prophet for their dissimulation and hypocrisy in religion — for their vain pretensions, and external shew of piety, destitute of any real internal principle. Indeed we have no reason to think ourselves in general affected by this imputation. We are far from claiming any merit in the external observance of religious ordinances; 'tis rather to be feared our national character comes under a censure of a different kind, from our aptness to abuse our boasted liberty, in the contemptuous disregard of institutions human and divine.

We indeed remember one extraordinary occasion, when a Fast appeared to produce its proper moral effects. *When the Lord arose to shake terribly the earth*, then indeed all orders and degrees of men were alarmed with the apprehension even of the distant danger. They who were inattentive to every ordinary call, to the still small voice of God, at once perceived His visible judgments in the terrors of an earthquake and were astonished into a fit of seriousness and piety. Then indeed their grand business of pleasure and diversion was for some time suspended, and their minds were possessed with an awful solicitude; when God's judgments were seen abroad in the earth, they then began to learn righteousness: our churches were filled with unusual

usual numbers; even people of fashion and high rank expressed signs of a new-felt devotion, and mixed with the vulgar in the common acts of humiliation and penitence. Such appearances of religious impressions in them were as extraordinary as the occasion. But it was soon found, that their piety gradually diminished, together with their fears; and they quickly relapsed into their state of former ease and security. But what will our behaviour be found to have been with regard to the present fast? And how might we suppose the prophet would expostulate with us on this occasion? for disuse rather than abuse of the ordinance; for profaneness and irreligion rather than hypocrisy. Let us therefore thus reason with ourselves: are we not dependent and sinful creatures? a nation laden with iniquity? and as such, subject to the infliction of God's judgments? And are we not called by authority to acts of publick humiliation and penitence? Surely on this occasion any appearance of joy and gladness, gaiety and pleasure, would be doubly criminal, not only unseasonable and indecent, but also profane and impious. Neither is there any among the sons of men too great to humble himself before God? Yea, rather, the obligation to the duty rises in proportion to the greatness of their station and character: for as the divine favour is requisite to the preservation of national prosperity, they, who by office, are most interested in the effects of publick

publick administration, are most interested in promoting the means necessary to this end; and accordingly ought to be most exemplary in the discharge of those religious services. I might add, that from a sense of decency, if not from the rules of Christianity, and even on the foot of civil obedience to publick authority, as friends to their country, or friends to the government (a character too often given without any determinate meaning) They stand more especially obliged to countenance and support this institution, by their personal attendance, and by publick expressions of piety, that *their light may shine before men*; and that the influence of their example, instead of misleading into sin, may bring many to righteousness.

We have on record in scripture an example even of an heathen nation which may instruct, or upbraid our behaviour in this particular. *The men of Niniveh will rise in judgment with this generation, and will condemn it.* How solemn and affecting were the circumstances of their whole proceeding, even as it appears in the simple narrative of the sacred Historian! — ^a *They believed God, and proclaimed a fast; and the King of Niniveh arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented*

^a *Jonah* iii. 5. &c.

of the evil that He had said He would do unto them; and He did it not.

St. Chrysostom's reflexion on this passage deserves our notice, as being applicable to our present purpose. "Let us consider, says He, "what was the manner of their fast, which "was thus accepted by God; and what were "the circumstances of their behaviour which "diverted or suspended the inflictions of those "divine judgments which the prophet had "denounced against them — Was it the simple act of fasting or putting sackcloth on "their loins? this cannot be said: no, it was "the universal reformation of their manners. "And from whence doth this appear? from "the express words of the Prophet; and "God saw their works. What works? what? "that they fasted and put sackcloth on their "loins? no: not a word of this; the Prophet passing by these circumstances adds "*that they turned every one from his evil ways; "and the Lord repented him of the evil which "he said he would do and he did it not.* So "you see that not the mere act of fasting delivered them from the threatned danger: "but the reformation of their manners reconciled these Barbarians to the divine mercy "and favour." ^a

^a As St. Chrysostom's reflexions are just and pertinent, and the manner of expression animated and forcible, and truly *Demosthenical*. I beg leave to add some other passages on the same subject as a sample of that oratory which formerly was so much admired —

ἡγήσαντο δὲ λέγειν ὅτι τῶν πολλῶν ἄλλῃ τῇ ἀκρίσει ἡγήσαντο οὐ τῇ τῶν
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We perceive in this instance what it was that reconciled a wicked people to the divine favour; not the formality of the outward act, but the moral purpose; not the mere act of fasting, but repentance and reformation of manners.

Again, we have a most remarkable instance of the efficacy of repentance to suspend the execution of God's judgments in the case of *Abab*, the most wicked among the kings of *Israel*. The terrors of the Lord denounced by his prophet worked a temporary conviction on his heart with the customary expressions of penitence and humiliation; *when Abab heard those words, he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite saying, seest thou how Abab humbleth himself before*

βρωμάτων αποχην μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν τῶν αμαρτημάτων. — ὁ φαρασαῖος ἐκεῖνος ἐνηστεύεν, ἀλλὰ μὴ τὴν νηστειὰν ἐκείνην κατήλθει ἐργῶς καὶ κενὸς τῶν ἀπο τῆς νηστείας καρπῶν· ὁ Τελωνὴς οὐκ ἐνηστεύσε, καὶ ἐμπεσοῦν γάρθεν ἐκεῖνα τοῦ νηστεύσαντος ὁ μὴ νηστεύσας· — ἐνηστεύον οἱ Νινωῖται καὶ ἐπιστάσαντο τὴν τῆ Θεοῦ εὐνοίαν· ἐνηστεύσαν καὶ οἱ Ἰσραῖλοι καὶ ἔδεν πλεον ἐπὶ αὐτῶν ἀλλὰ καὶ κατεργαζόμενοι ἀπηλθον· — νηστεύεις; δείξον μοι ἅλα τῶν ἐργῶν αὐτῶν. ποίων ἐργῶν, φησὶν; εἰν ἰδὴς πενήτα, εἰλεσόν· — εἰν ἰδὴς ἐχθρὸν, καὶ ἀλλοτρίον· — εἰν ἰδὴς φίλον εὐδοκίμου, μὴ βασκηνῆς· — εἰν ἰδὴς γυναῖκα εὐμερῶν, ὑπερῶν· — μὴ γὰρ δὴ σῶμα νηστεύτω μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ἀκροὶ καὶ πόδες καὶ χεῖρες καὶ δὲ πάντα τὰ σωματικά ημῶν μέλη· νηστεύσωσαν χεῖρες ἀργαῖαι καὶ πλεονεξίας καρτερὰ ὑμῶν· — νηστεύσωσαν πόδες δρομῶν τῶν ἐπὶ τὰ παρόντα· ἵατροι ἀφισταμένοι· νηστεύσωσαν ὀφθαλμοὶ παιδεύομενοι μηποτε ὀφείσι εὐμερῶσι ἐπιπῆδαν, μηδὲ ἀλλοτρία περιεργαζέσθαι ἡμέτερον· — νηστεύω καὶ ἀκροὶ· νηστεια δ' ἀκροῦ μὴ δεχέσθαι κατηργίας καὶ ἀφροσύνας· νηστεύτω δὲ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀπο τῶν ἐρημάτων αἰσχρῶν καὶ λοιδορίας. Homil. 3. ad Pop. Antioch.

a King xxi. 27, — 29.

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me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

In this example we have a lesson for our admonition and encouragement; since we may justly argue thus; if a repentance so imperfect could suspend the execution of God's judgments, what good effects may not be expected from a sincere and complete repentance? This case is likewise the more applicable to ourselves, as there was a strong occasional call to repentance: which, though a general duty, derives an additional obligation and reverence from the appointment by publick authority.

It appears in the case both of *Ahab* and of the *Ninivites* that they not only fasted, but repented. A moral effect was produced, to which fasting was applied only as an instrumental means. And in vain did the Pharisee in our Saviour's parable boast of his fasting twice a week; we find that the repenting publican went home to his house more justified than this self-applauding hypocrite.

Final causes are the grand point, on which moral agents should fix their view, and accordingly regulate their behaviour. Let fasting, and every ordinance of like kind be subservient to the general end — the purposes of piety — the work of repentance and reformation. Let not then the *Libertine*, on the one hand, despise this institution as useless and insignificant, which hath a natural tendency
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to introduce a serious frame of mind, and lead him to repentance — An institution almost universally received, as the most proper expression of publick humiliation and sorrow, and most acceptable to the supreme Being, whose sovereignty is recognized by this religious act in the deprecation of his judgments. On the other hand, let not the *superstitious* Christian value himself on the supposed merit of such services. Let him not forget the end for which such severities are exercised. *Is it merely to bow down his head as a bulrush; and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?* Something more is required to make this a true fast. For in vain doth he humble his body by abstinence, if at the same time he cherishes a spiritual pride: if with a pharisaical arrogance he, on this account, *trusting in himself that he is righteous, despises and condemns others*, as not coming up to the standard of his sanctity. Surely in vain doth he affect the praise of being religious, who is destitute of the characteristical christian virtues, humility and charity; humility before God, and charity towards his neighbour. The end of fasting then is spiritual mortification and the work of repentance: and wherein does this consist? Not in any transient act of occasional sorrow, proceeding, it may be, merely from the uneasy apprehensions of some impending evil, but in the lasting effects of a sincere sorrow, *a repentance not to be repented of*, namely, a thorough change of mind, and reformation

tion of manners. To this end we must exercise an habitual government of our passions, and mortify every lust—*cut off our right hand*, if need be, do violence to the most favorite inclinations of our corrupt nature in obedience to the laws of God. Without this our religious services will deservedly be esteemed the *sacrifice of fools*: our almsgiving and fasting without this qualification will lose the very name and nature of virtue. And indeed, if there be any merit or praise in our virtue, it is contained in the exercise of self-denial. 'Tis vain to boast of continency where there is no temptation to lust, of abstinence amidst scarcity of provisions, or of bravery when there is no danger. True christian fortitude is distinguished by the severity of the trial, where there are some dangers and difficulties to be overcome, which are thrown in our way by the enemy of our spiritual state—by the lusts that war against the soul. Every instance of self-denial is a conquest over them; and its value rises in proportion to the difficulty of the struggle. On the whole; *that* is not the true virtue which is such outwardly in the eye of the world—the idol of the vulgar; but that which is inward, and *of the heart*: whose sincerity is evidenced by acts of habitual self-denial—*whose praise is not of men, but of God*.

So then from what hath been offered we collect the true *moral* end of fasting; with regard to what is past—*Repentance*; and
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with regard to all gratifications present or future, — *self-denial*: a complex virtue, truly and properly christian; which flesh and blood was unable sufficiently to reveal, as it is unwilling at all to bear.

What then is that *self* which a christian is required to *deny*? It is the corrupt part of our compound nature; which, because it is generally predominant, gives a denomination to the whole; and accordingly, in it's formal notion, implies not only what relates to the animal-life — to sensual pleasures, or temporal interests, but also every kind of mental depravity, or in the Apostle's language, *all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*. And in this view *lovers of themselves* stand opposed to *lovers of God*. *Self-denial* therefore is the restraint of all those irregular inclinations and passions in obedience to the divine will — an obedience universal and absolute — without any restriction or limitation. This is necessarily implied in the first and great commandment; and accordingly an indulgence given to any one vice is utterly inconsistent with the character of a *christian*.

In the gospel-history we have the remarkable case of a young man, who came to our Saviour, and thought himself justified by his punctual observance of the commandments, imagining that *he lacked nothing* further requisite to complete the character of legal and moral holiness; and on the whole, was not far from what might entitle him to *the kingdom of heaven*.

heaven. But He who knew what was in man, knew and shewed him his deficiency; yet lackest thou one thing; sell all that thou hast and give unto the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up the cross, and follow me. But what what the event? It seems this was an act of self-denial too severe and grievous to flesh and blood; he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions. On which occasion our Saviour pronounced this alarming reflexion; how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! *Matt. xix, Mar. x. Luk. xviii.*

What is observed in this instance may by parity of reason be applied to many other similar cases. Look into the most plausible characters, and soon you will find some one thing or other still lacking. Many men keep up the decent appearances of religion, yet at the same time will not scruple to gratify some importunate passion, — some favourite vice suited to their constitution or inclination. Thus under fasting and the exercise of bodily austerities we sometimes see a malevolence and uncharitableness, the effects of a spiritual pride. In fact, men are apt to make favourable allowances to their own particular case; and to urge pretences, either political or religious, to excuse every failing; *Is it not a little one? or, when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.* But after all, what is this but a

fort of prevarication and hypocrisy censured in my text by the prophet? A wilful disobedience to any one command of God can never be reconciled to the principles of Christianity; for *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* An imperfect partial conformity is insufficient: He who *trieth the hearts and reins* will not accept such a blemished sacrifice.

Wherewith then shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the high God? — With the internal principle, as well as the outward professions of piety, — with purity of heart, as well as cleanness of hands, — with the restraint of every inordinate lust — *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*: every branch of our fashionable follies, and our expensive luxuries must be cut off; and a thorough change of mind evidenced in the universal reformation of our manners; *this is the fast which the Lord hath chosen.*

This true end and purpose of a Fast is what every one should keep in view; and as the publick virtue of the community is contained in the good behaviour of the several individual members, it behoveth every one to apply this general duty of self-denial to his own particular case.

Give me leave here to point out several instances in which the exercise of the duty should take place. Let the sensualist, or man of pleasure stop short in his career, do violence

lence to his inclination, and, considering that he is a Christian, direct his pursuits to a better end: — Let the adulterer and whore-monger withdraw from the harlots houses; reflecting, that for *these things God will bring them to judgment*: — Let the modern Gentleman of fashion be no longer misled into schemes of false unmanly gallantry, nor murder his time, reputation, and fortunes at gaming-tables: — Let the private politician *study to be quiet, and do his own business*: — Let the party-zealot learn to speak charitably and deal justly with his neighbour tho' of a different denomination: — Let the covetous prefer godliness to gain: — Let the ambitious take the lowest seat — let him renounce his views, his immoderate desires of secular interests, and dishonourable methods of gratifying them. And let the man of business attend to the one thing needful, and *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*. Let those who would be thought the only or the chief friends to government be ready to verify their professions: let them ask their hearts, Will they, in times of common danger, offer themselves willingly for the publick service? will they assist with their fortunes, and by their liberality contribute to the relieving those necessities of the State, which perhaps were in some measure occasioned by their rapine or luxury? And with regard to those Patriots who distinguish themselves by a clamorous zeal for the interests of their country, and on this principle

principle as implicitly oppose the measures of government, as others support them, let them also ask their hearts whether their opposition proceeds from true publick spirit and disinterested views : — or whether they are not influenced by resentment and hatred of the persons, whom they oppose; by envy of that power or honour, which they have in vain laboured to acquire; or by love of praise for they know not what, that idol of popularity which vanisheth like a dream when one awaketh. — Should it appear that their behaviour is influenced by any of these or the like sinister motives, we have reason to call upon them, as well as those of the contrary party, for the exercise of self-denial in this respect, to moderate their prejudices and restrain the violence of every favorite passion and inclination; to sacrifice what they esteem most precious to the sense of duty; to make all private and personal regards give way to the publick good: this is the strongest proof of integrity; and without this the most plausible pretensions may justly be called in question.

And now perhaps *Scholars* may ask — *what shall we do?* What acts of self-denial are required from us? Submit chearfully to that restraint of your natural liberty, which the rules of your community have imposed: conform your manners to the established scheme of discipline, refrain from the petulancy of wit, from all irreverence to your superiors; avoid fashionable luxuries, and expensive vanities

ties in every shape; preserve as much as may be the primitive simplicity of manners, frugality in the way of living, and that habitual seriousness which is the ground-work, and preservative of every virtue. Let the sense of statutable obligations enforce that conformity of behaviour in the University, which the rules of good manners and decency would require of you as *Gentlemen* in assemblies of less importance.

Not to point out more particular instances under this head, I shall only enforce this general exhortation, that every one in their several stations and capacities would faithfully watch over their own hearts in the government of their passions and inclinations, by the exercise of self-denial in its several branches: so, would the good purposes of the present institution be most effectually answered, and this would be *such a Fast as the Lord hath chosen*.

I cannot here omit one reflexion suggested by the words that follow my text; in which the prophet censures the Jews for acts of cruelty to their poor brethren, both positive and negative, in instances of direct violence and oppression, and in withholding the due relief for their necessities. While we read this censure, we may with complacency reflect upon our national character, as in neither respect affected by this imputation. As to the former, our liberties civil and religious are so well guarded by wholesome laws, that they scarce allow

allow room for complaint on any such account; and so far is the shew of religion from being made an instrument of wickedness, that, thro' a general disregard of it, there seems scarce any temptation left for hypocrisy, nor encouragement given to hope, under the pretence of piety, to sanctify acts of injustice. And as to the exercise of publick charity and beneficence in various shapes for the relief of every necessity, scarce any age hath produced more eminent examples than the present. May this sacrifice prove acceptable to the Lord, and be a veil to *cover the multitude of our sins!*

I wish that we could as easily disculpate ourselves in all other articles: but the very appointment of this solemnity proceeds with too much reason upon a contrary supposition, — a supposition of national wickedness, and from thence enforces the necessity of a national repentance. Although we ought at all times to acknowledge our sins before God, yet ought we most chiefly so to do on occasions extraordinary, — when we are admonished by the voice of publick authority. Let us then endeavour to answer the moral purposes of this solemn humiliation. Let us under a conviction of our unworthiness, and, as deeply interested in the consequences, seriously call our ways to remembrance, — review the tenour of our behaviour, — and finally so judge ourselves that we be not judged of the Lord.

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Let us then judge our actions by the proper standard, the rule of God's Laws; not by the opinion of the world, or comparison with others. Estimates made in such a comparative view are very apt to deceive us: we become well enough satisfied if we think ourselves as good, or better than our neighbours, or enemies. But, surely, it is a sad ground of comfort, which arises merely from the supposition that others are more wicked than ourselves. Perhaps too the supposition may be hastily made; and without sufficient warrant. But, were it ever so well grounded, it would be of no use to us — it would not give us an exemption from punishment: for all sinners, as such, become debtors to the divine justice, and must submit to its utmost demand. Our Saviour's declaration in this case (*Luk. 13. 3, 5.*) is express and peremptory, and extends to all persons, without any limitation or exception; *I say unto You, except Ye REPENT, Ye shall all likewise perish.*

Moreover, let us not like the Jews flatter ourselves with false pretences, and vain hopes. — *The temple of the Lord, — the temple of the Lord* were noisy sounds in the mouths of those, who had no regard for the Lord, or his temple. Many also boasted of their national merit, or that some characters among them were eminent for piety; assuring themselves of safety, as being the distinguished favourites of heaven — *The Lord will defend Jerusalem for his servant David's sake.* A promise, which
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would assuredly be made good, while they kept themselves qualified to receive the benefit: but when they failed in that, the event shewed how vain and groundless such presumptuous expectations were. We also justly boast of our excellent constitution in Church and State, and the glory of our Reformation. But after all, the mere name of a free people and of *Protestants* will prove a weak protection of our liberties, civil and religious. And surely in vain do we boast of the liberty which we wantonly abuse, and of the *purity* of our *reformation*, while we dishonour that character by the degeneracy of our manners; in vain do we hope for God's favour, while we disregard his authority, and transgress his laws.

If then upon the just estimate of our national character it appears, that we have degenerated from that sense of dignity and sobriety which becometh us as Men, as Christians, and as Englishmen — if we have deviated into a strange levity of manners — a false unmanly politeness and gaiety — the manners of that nation, with whose vices we ought ever to wage war, and admit no manner of communication; — let us stop short in time, and correct this unaccountable infatuation: let us rather exert a manly spirit and vigour, most agreeable to our constitutional character, — a serious solicitude, proportioned to the respective importance of our concerns.

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Further; have we misapplied our *riches* to wrong purposes, and perverted the blessings of plenty into the nourishment of luxury? let the discipline of this present Fast, which enjoins a temporary abstinence, suggest the useful lesson of habitual temperance and sobriety; so that what should be for our *wealth* may never become to us the occasion of falling.

If we find that we have *abused* our liberty, — perverting it into licentiousness — if emboldened by impunity, and misled by example, we have indulged our passions, unawed by any restraint of laws human or divine, let us take this seasonable admonition, and *apply our hearts unto wisdom*, while we reflect upon the mischievous consequences of our behaviour; that it really tends to weaken and overturn that constitution in which we glory.

And with regard to our *religious* liberties, as there is a peculiar danger of abuse, so there is a special reason of caution. We are indeed free from that yoke which neither we nor our fathers could bear, the tyranny of the church of *Rome*. But still we are subject to the yoke of Christ, and the rules of Christianity. Our character, as *Protestants*, is relative; — in opposition to the corruptions of that church, which we have renounced. And the liberty of conscience in the choice, is far from implying the liberty of having no religion; — it rather supposes the contrary; and that to a degree of more than ordinary solicitude. Under the notion of *Protestants* we should ra-

ther consider ourselves as Christians *reformed*; and as such, under more especial obligations to purity of doctrine and manners. Let not our abhorrence of bigotry and superstition mislead us into profaneness and irreligion. Such an aversion from Popery is the most likely means to betray us into it: the transition from one extreme to another, however distant it may seem, is most obvious and easy: for the principles of the most corrupt religion will ever be most easily admitted by those, who are unsettled in religious notions, or have no principles at all. Let us then in this instance, act with all that discretion and moderation which our Christian character implies, *as free, and not using our liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*

We should consider, that the liberty which we enjoy is a rational, legal liberty; and though it implies a freedom of action, yet it is such as is prescribed and limited by law; and therefore from a regard to the order of that government in which we make our boast, we should refrain from every exorbitancy, and learn to reverence and obey the laws by which our liberty is regulated and defended.

Again, have we been too much elated by our success in war? have we been betrayed into presumption on the opinion of our superior strength? Let reflexion here come in to our aid, and check the premature joy of triumph, by pointing out that latent danger, which is the ordinary effect of security —

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Amidst our highest hopes we must still remember — that *the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; but it is the Lord who giveth the victory in the battle.*

And on this head we cannot but acknowledge visible marks of the divine favour to these kingdoms in a series of extraordinary events: And accordingly, amidst the present acts of humiliation, in which we confess our own unworthiness; we at the same time offer our tribute of praise and thanksgiving for the manifold goodness of the Lord, *who hath done so great things for us already; whereof we rejoice.* Among other instances give me leave to mention that wonderful revolution and total change of our national spirit — a change from a state of slumber and supineness, of timidity and almost self-desertion, to a state of activity and vigour — of sound policy both military and civil — of bravery and intrepidity, and that glorious exertion of our natural powers, which hath proved under God the defence of our own country, — the envy of our neighbours, — the terror of our enemies, and the admiration of all the world.

But moreover, with the most devout thankfulness we must acknowledge the interposition of the divine power, which turneth the hearts of Princes, and controuleth the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, so signally evidenced in extinguishing the evil spirit of discord and faction — in exciting a new spirit of publick virtue and integrity — in effecting
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the union of contending parties, and the universal concurrence of all orders and denominations in the common cause — the true interest of their country. 'Tis this union which gives health and vigour to the national constitution, and inspires a courage and strength, which, before some late tryals, we scarce knew how to exert. May we ever preserve a due sensibility of the important benefit; let us never, through neglect or abuse, disappoint it's good effects!

Lastly; with regard to the circumstances of this present war — while we reflect on the motives which gave the occasion and the manner in which it hath been conducted, — in each of these views we find matter of consolation and satisfaction; that the bloodguiltiness of the war is not to be laid to our charge — that neither ambition, avarice or revenge prompted us to act offensively, without any just provocation: but self-preservation called us to arms against the invasion and encroachments of an ambitious, insidious enemy. Our generous behaviour hath shewn, that we are not a people which *delight in war*, and sport in the miseries of mankind. No additional acts of cruelty have aggravated the distresses of our conquered enemies; yea rather we have gained a double conquest over them, first by our superior valour, and then by signal acts of unmerited clemency and generosity.

Nay further, while his Majesty's arms were thus universally successful in every quarter of the

the world, to the astonishment and confusion of our enemies — and even beyond our own expectations — even amidst this full career of prosperity and triumph, we have seen a most pleasing instance of royal condescension and generosity, in restraining the insolence of victory, and offering peace to the vanquished on equitable terms. But in vain are such overtures made to those treacherous dealers in policy; who, while they speak friendly with their mouths, have war in their heart: — in vain do we labour for peace. — For what hope of this desirable blessing is there in the present state of things? *What Peace! so long as the whoredoms and witchcrafts of this Jezebel are so many?* The ambition and intrigues of such perfidious enemies admit no honourable terms of pacification; who make the very negotiation for peace the means of prolonging the war; while they artfully delude a proud infatuated nation into their alliance under their specious pretence of a family-compact — that formidable confederacy of the House of *Bourbon*, which may justly give an alarm to the neighbouring kingdoms, as it hath often embroiled the Powers, and endangered the Liberties of *Europe*.

Be it then the glory and disgrace of our enemies to disturb the peace of kingdoms! It was foretold, that offences of this kind must come; but woe unto them by whom they come. Be our praise of a different complexion — the praise of true magnanimity; which

which is ever consistent with the rules of humanity, and our christian character — to relieve the oppressed — to repel the oppressor — to shew patience, and forbearance under the provocation of injuries — to shew as much lenity and moderation amidst the pride of triumph, as bravery and courage in the heat of battle. Be this our unenvied honour.

Let us above all things proceed in that still more interesting conquest — the subduing our corrupt inclinations by an universal reformation of manners; let us prove the sincerity of our religious professions, by *loosing the bands of wickedness* in every shape, and by the practice of every possible virtue. So shall we make this an acceptable day unto the Lord: so shall the Lord be further favourable and gracious unto our *Sion*; — in all circumstances of difficulty and danger become our sun and shield — our director and defender — cover our head in the day of battle, and give us the long desired blessing of peace; so, “*that being delivered from our enemies we may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.*”

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